Interview with Guy E. Coriden Jr.

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

GUY E. CORIDEN, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is November 18, 1992. This is an interview with Guy E. Coriden. We're doing this on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Guy, I wonder if you could give me a little information about your background.

CORIDEN: I was born in Syracuse, New York, May 31, 1921. I moved from there when I was an infant, really, and I was raised in Hammond, Indiana. I went to grade school and high school there and I went to Indiana University as an undergraduate.

Q: What were you majoring in at Indiana?

CORIDEN: I was in Business Administration with minors in Economics and Math. I graduated just prior to World War II. It was a “speed-up” program to get us out. I went for two summers and graduated in December 1942 rather than June, 1943, almost immediately went into the Army and shortly thereafter, left for Europe. I spent the three years, in a combat engineer outfit. It was the 234th Combat Engineer Battalion. We landed on D-Day and went all the way through to meet the Russians at the Elbe.

Q: It must have been quite something.

CORIDEN: Well, it kept us busy—building bridges and blowing mines and putting in mines, and blowing bridges. Eventually after the war, we were building camps for people to stay in when the troops came home. So that's how I spent the war years and after that I came back and worked in Chicago which is adjacent to Hammond, Indiana. I worked for a small securities firm called Paul H. Davis & Co., that eventually became Hornblower and Weeks and now has become something else. I was a securities analyst for a while and in those days of course, this was 1945-46, the market was much smaller. A good day on the market was 800,000 shares which is hard to believe. These firms were all partnerships and the partners were worried about their money so in the down market, we were getting little cuts in salaries so I went on to do reinsurance for a time—the American Mutual Reinsurance Company. I didn't find that satisfying so I went back to school. I got a Master's at Marquette, then a Master's at the Fletcher School in foreign economics—Foreign Economic Policy at Marquette and the regular Fletcher degree in Foreign Affairs. I came to Washington and worked with the CIA for seven or eight years. A professor for whom I had great respect, Charlie Kindleberger, suggested that I go into a new agency where they were starting to make policy rather than go to a place like Commerce where the policy is hundreds of years old and one has very little influence. And I think he was right. In fact, I got a fellowship at the State Department in their Economic Internees Program and I also had a job offer from CIA. I went both places and I found the guy in the State Department was asking how I would feel if they had to do away with this program and I would be put into one of these elements in the Bureau of Economic Affairs. If he was asking that question, it was clear to me that that was probably going to happen and that they didn't need the people in those jobs so those jobs weren't going to amount to much. The guy in CIA was really busy and really needed help, so I decided to go to CIA. I think it was one of the correct decisions that I made; one of maybe not many. I had two friends in the same State Department program and neither of them lasted over a year, because the jobs weren't interesting and weren't challenging.

Q: I wonder if you could give a feeling about the people at the CIA; it was really brand new then.

CORIDEN: It was really an elite agency at that time. That's how the people inside felt; I'm not sure how people on the outside felt. There were many senior staff from the “eastern policy establishment”, as it was called. There were a lot of people down there, heading it, who were all from Eastern schools; lawyers from Harvard or Yale.

Q: I graduated from Williams in 1950; they were all over us. About half my class made an application.

CORIDEN: You could do things; you were actually participating in making policy. I was never in anything operational. I was basically on the economic research policy side of it and was dealing with other agencies in town. I was on a number of inter-agency committees dealing with various aspects of intelligence. That was fascinating and a rewarding sort of thing. Not everybody felt that we knew what we were doing. One guy said, “Do you think we're really a cover for something that's really going on here?”

Q: What was your impression on dealing with other agencies on economic matters? I assume it would be Treasury, Commerce, State and Justice. What was your impression of the expertise and the appreciation of the foreign factor, you might say, of the agencies?

CORIDEN: I think at that time most of us felt that Treasury had a small talented core of people who were very good and knew what they were doing in their field. Of course, they had a limited part of the field. We felt that, this is probably biased, that the CIA was next, and that Commerce and State didn't really amount of too much.

Q: There was very much the feeling that the Economic Bureau was quite weak in the State Department, wasn't there?

CORIDEN: I don't know when it started in State. I remember one guy on a committee; he was actually the chairman of the committee because it was an international policy of some kind we were dealing with. He had come back from twenty-six straight years overseas, so he really didn't know what was going on in Washington and the rest of us just sort of took things away from him because he didn't understand what was going on, even though he was very intelligent, a senior guy. He was just out of his operating milieu. After that, there was a thing called President Eisenhower's Commission on National Goals that he constituted at the end of his administration to provide guidance for the couple of decades ahead. It was headed by Henry Wriston and Frank Pace. Bill Bundy, with whom I had worked in the Agency, was named Staff Director and he asked me to go with him.

I went with him as Staff Administrator. We were both on leave from the Agency. The Agency was paying our salaries and was reimbursed by the Commission, but we had nothing to do with CIA at that time. That was an exciting experience. We produced a book called Goals for Americans. It had twelve chapters and each chapter was written by an authority in the field. Then the commissioners, who besides Wriston and Pace, were Crawford Greenwald, who was head of Dupont; George Meany, James Conant, Clark Kerr, General Greunther, and a number of people like that. They took a genuine interest in it, as did all the chapter writers, who were people like Tom Watson, Clinton Rossiter, William Langer and Lawrence Soth, for agricultural policy. In our operation, we were each responsible for a couple of chapters. All the authors had advisory panels representing the range of views. We were convening their advisory panels and getting the chapters written. It was exciting to see the range of critical problems. A lot of people around the country were interested in it and lobbied us to see if they could get their views in the book. We did not change authors opinions, but it was an experience to come out of the CIA which was entirely secret, and then being lobbied on a range of domestic policies.

Q: Was it bipartisan?

CORIDEN: Yes, it was. Frank Pace was a Democrat at the time; Henry Wriston was a Republican; General Greunther, was basically a Democrat and George Meany, who was certainly a Democrat. I think it was balanced, with people who were respected in the country for their views. It didn't become controversial and it didn't have the impact it might of had, because it was at the end of Eisenhower's administration. Kennedy came in and the Kennedy administration was exciting at the time and this effort was overwhelmed. I think if it had come out at another time it might have gotten more attention because it was a good report. Some of the recommendations and analysis were on target and are valid today. I think four or five hundred thousand books published and were used in colleges and high schools for discussion programs. It was bad timing. As somebody once said, “The only time any report has any impact is when people who prepare the report go back into positions where they have some force for carrying it out.” I think that's true. General Draper said that.

Q: You were working with Bill Bundy?

CORIDEN: He's the one who got me into it. He was Staff Director and there were only six of us on the staff.

Q: He later moved on. He was important within the Kennedy administration on Vietnam.

CORIDEN: We both decided at the time that we didn't want to go back into the Agency. The Agency was an exciting place to be, but the rules about what you could do or say outside of it were restrictive, and we both decided we liked the outside better. He went on to the Defense Department where he became a Deputy Assistant Secretary. I went to State and I went into the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This was about 1962. The Bureau was starting into a Soviet and Eastern European program and they didn't have anybody on board, I was told, who knew much about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I was presumed to since I had worked on them in CIA. I was a Deputy Director and headed up that Soviet and Eastern European program.

Q: This would be at the beginning of the Kennedy administration. Where did the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs fit into the general State Department scheme of things?

CORIDEN: It was a normal bureau. A guy named Phil Coombs headed the bureau at that time as the Assistant Secretary. He came from the Ford Foundation, was brought in, but never really, for some reason or other, caught hold on the whole thing. I don't know if he didn't understand government. He was a bright guy, but he didn't last all that long. I think only six or eight months and then Luke Battle, who was a Foreign Service Officer, came and took over the bureau as Assistant Secretary. He was a different sort of a guy. He knew his way around the Department. He had been Special Assistant to Rusk, or a right-hand man to Rusk as a junior officer. He knew his way around the Department and had a lot of things owed to him, so did a great deal for the status of the bureau.

Q: This is terribly important isn't it? I can imagine a bureau, such as yours, could have faded. You needed a strong personality didn't you?

CORIDEN: I am not a bureau historian. The operation had been around for a long time. It had just become a bureau and Phil Coombs was the first Assistant Secretary. Before, it had been another entity within the Department. The program had gone on since the Forties. It had started as an exchange program with Latin America and with Fulbright Scholarships, it became a bigger and more visible thing. Luke Battle was a good administrator; knew his way around and did a great deal for getting greater space and better people and everything else in the whole Bureau. Then when Kennedy died, I think he decided he didn't want to do it anymore and he left. Charlie Frankel who was a distinguished professor at Columbia University, a very dynamic person, come in and ran it for several years. He did a very good job. He didn't have the operational savvy that Luke had for running the Department, but nationally he had a reputation as a thinker and a scholar and a guy with real cultural credentials. So nationally you had a very good image at that time. He seemed to get along with Rusk and was called on by President Johnson to write speeches. He was a very able and facile writer and so he was called on by the

President to write speeches. This was a time when the Vietnam War was coming into full flower. He was not in agreement with a lot of the policies. He did not make a point of running around hollering about it, but he was not in agreement and had a number of discussions and eventually he left. They brought in a guy, he didn't last long; a very nice guy. He was a guy who was already in the Administration some place, and had been a law professor at New York University. He was a decent human being, but had not had a concept of what he was into and had been promised a judgeship afterwardsand he hung on until he got his judgeship and Johnson left. Then John Richardson took over for the Republican Administration and was still there when I left.

Q: Did you notice a difference when a new Administration came in? When the Nixon Administration came in?

CORIDEN: No, there wasn't really any significant difference at that time. The Johnson Administration had cut back the Bureau. They were cutting back everything because of the Vietnam War. In my own particular area, relationships with the Soviet Union, were naturally strained, in that this was still an East-West situation. The programs were certainly not expanding and in many places were being cut back because the Soviets were reacting to the fact that we were attacking, at least in their view, one of their clients. They did not want to cut off the exchanges program. I think I participated in negotiating about nine different agreements with the Soviets. The Soviet program was arranged through agreements which were negotiated every two years and provided, in great detail, for all the things that were supposed to take place.

I think there was one negotiated in 1962; that was the second one I participated in—then '64, '66, and '68. In '68, we went to Moscow; I was part of the delegation. The Soviets told us every way they could, we could have a continuation of the same agreement or we could cut it back as much as we wanted, but there wasn't going to be any increase. We couldn't convince anyone in the Department of that. There were a couple of people who wanted to make a point of having an increase to show that the Vietnam war had no effect. The

Soviets used personal relationships to tell us that this is what it is and we're not going to expand it. If you what to cut it in half, if you want to cut it out, “fine”, we can accept that too, but it's not going to get any bigger. You can talk here for months if you want, but that's it. Finally we had to send the Deputy Head of delegation home to repeat the message to the Department and I guess they finally agreed to buy it. We were there over three months because of the stupidity of the people back home. They were trying to show that our activities in Vietnam were not affecting our foreign policy around the rest of the world. Everything was going on and everything was expanding, everything was just as good as it always had been. They wanted to keep the Soviet relationship because they felt the exchanges were useful; having people come in was useful. They still wanted a relationship with the other super power that was relatively normal, but the Soviets weren't going to tell their allies. “We don't care what's happened to you, we're expanding with them”.

Q: Isn't this the way the professional diplomats on the ground are trying to explain that there is another side to the situation?

CORIDEN: Well, the people trying to push this view were still professional diplomats in the Department. It wasn't John Richardson or Charlie Frankel who did understand it, or Ed Ray, it was the people in the Bureau of European Affairs who wanted to make this point and they were the people who had been in this for some time but didn't understand. They were being stubborn, they were going to “show them”.

Q: Could you talk about, in dealing with these negotiations with the Soviets, what was the Soviet style of negotiation as opposed to the American style?

CORIDEN: It depended and it was different in different years and depending on what Soviets were doing it, and on our side who was doing it. The heads of the delegation made considerable difference. This one in '68, Boris Klosson, was a Foreign Service Office and really the guy running it, although the Ambassador to Moscow was really the head of the delegation, but Boris was running it. Boris understood this whole thing and was a low key

sort of negotiator and the Soviet negotiator, I can't remember his name, was also low key, so it was very professional. You were trying to work out little details around the edges of trying to get the size of the program. We kept trying to get a little bit more and they made certain that we didn't. In other years we had more flamboyant Soviets who would come in and make violent statements about not doing anything for several days, and then come back and say that they'll accept “this, this, and that's it” but then really accepting a good bit with no real indication that there was going to be any change. We had people like Charlie Bohlen heading the thing at least one time. He was very professional and certainly understood. He spoke Russian and was easy to get along with on this sort of thing. The Soviets, in these, which are not the key negotiations, I certainly recognize that, had their own styles and tended to make propaganda statements, although really didn't go anyplace. I suppose they went back home for them. It was reported back that they made all these strong, offensive statements towards the Americans and most of the Americans were uncomfortable replying to this sort of thing because they really didn't make any difference. People like Bohlen had difficulty getting exercised about something a Soviet had said in something like this and I would have too—when you're just in a negotiation that doesn't really go any place and nobody really cares about, except us. Eventually I think the Soviets came around to accepting the same style. They didn't do as much of it. I suppose somebody was reporting it back home and they had to.

Q: Were you dealing with strictly the Soviet Union or also with Eastern Europe?

CORIDEN: These agreements were of course with the Soviet Union. We had exchanges with Poland for a long time and they weren't under an agreement. The Poles kept saying they wanted a written agreement and we kept saying that they should be happy not having one. They didn't know all the problems and we had much more flexibility. They didn't believe us, but they went along without the agreement. We had a bigger program there and we just worked out things as we went along. You obviously just couldn't send people; you had to talk to them, but we didn't have an agreement in advance. We'd agree to send so many and they would take so many. We developed programs with all the other

countries, eventually. We had a written agreement with Romania. The Ambassador at that time, Bill Crawford, persuaded the higher ups in the Department that we ought to have an agreement because the Romanians wanted one and so we negotiated one; although, we, at our level, didn't think we ought to have one. Nevertheless, we had one and it was always a difficult agreement. They didn't carry out their end of the agreement, but we did get a fairly wide penetration in the country—professors, students, and performing arts groups, a cultural center, and a magazine—all the things that we always tried to get. We had a very small program in Bulgaria. I remember I decided to cultivate their cultural attach#—a strange guy. After a couple of meetings, he took me out to lunch at a nice French restaurant, that since has gone out of business, and he kept asking about how he could have these programs. I would say that we would send three students over to your country and you could send three to ours. We could send a couple of professors. He always wanted to know who would pay. I explained to him that we would pay the dollar costs and he would pay for the costs in his country, in his currency. When he was leaving, not too long after that; we didn't have an agreement, but he said he learned a lot here; he'd learned what they don't believe back in Bulgaria and that is that Bulgaria is not a very important country and that not too many people care about Bulgaria, and that if Bulgaria wants to get on the stage, it has to move out and open up with other people. He was going back and try to work out something for this exchange program because it was important for the Bulgarians. He really was very frank about this. Fortunately, he defected about six months later. He must have had a very bad time when he went back. He defected to Germany, not the United States, and I never saw him again.

Q: In the late 1960s, early 1970s—what constituted the exchange program with the Soviet Union? What were we after?

CORIDEN: We felt, and I still feel, that you had to have contact with these countries and I guess I got this from the academic community. The universities had started a small exchanges program before the first official agreement and they participated fully in the official one. We felt that if you are going to know anything about the Soviet Union, and

the academic community felt that around 1960, that we really didn't have an in-depth knowledge of the Soviet Union. All of our scholars were people who had come out of the Soviet Union twenty-years before and we were using defectors who had limited ability, limited knowledge, and a point of view that they were trying to sell. We didn't have access for getting people in. We really didn't have enough area expertise to base policy on and it was going to get worse as things went along. We were talking about a couple of generations of Soviet experts who had never seen the Soviet Union and had never really spoken to a Russian. In a way, there was a feeling that we weren't going to know and understand the Soviet Union and they weren't going to know and understand us unless we had some sort of contact other than the official diplomatic missions. With that as a first motivation, we tried to expand. You had USIA of course, people who had propaganda responsibility wanting to get propaganda in, besides Voice of America and Radio Liberty. The basic part that we had in the State Department was a student exchanges program that started out as about twenty-five graduate students annually. It eventually expanded to about fifty to seventy-five and then we had professors teaching on both sides and exchanges of language teachers, both for training and teaching language and exchanges of performing arts groups which, we again, wanted to do for cultural penetration. We wanted them to know what they were missing and they liked it officially because they made money with the Soviet troupes in the US. They made a very good impression—the Bolshoi Ballet and many others. We also had an exchange of specialists—people who would do a lecture tour. I remember we sent Richard Diebenkorn, the painter over. Edward Albee and John Cheever had done one of these. Irving Stone was another. They would have meetings with their counterparts. We also had exchanges of mayors; of young political leaders; book publishers—all sorts of things that would have an impact on them in trying to explain how these things work in our country. Book publishers, for instance, were always trying to get American books sold in the USSR, and they had trouble getting the Soviets to understand that one couldn't always sell a million copies of some obscure Soviet book. It didn't work that way; it had to be something people wanted or it wouldn't sell at all. Mayors and political leaders obviously had their own impact. We

were looking for things that would work out and would provide this exchange of views and an understanding on both sides of what the problems were and what the culture difference was. I think it had a great impact. I think it was something that worked. It was obviously very small, given the size of the two countries, but it did get us a generation of sound scholars. In fact, we had more than we needed for the jobs available at universities. I think we do have generations of sound scholars.

We always had problems of one kind or another. The Soviets always wanted to send students in scientific and technical fields and we bureaucrats wanted to send them too, but after a couple years, we met with leaders in the academic community and they said that it didn't make any sense for scientists or engineers to study in the Soviet Union because they would lose a year. They weren't learning anything there that would do them any good. They recognized that in mathematics and in some areas of physics, the Soviets were indeed advanced, but our students couldn't get access to that work and to those people. The other people they did have access to weren't any good for them and they couldn't really recommend that our graduate students give up a year of their academic life in the USSR. We ended up sending historians, area studies people, various political scientists —economic researchers and that sort of thing. They ended up sending technicians and engineers. The Defense Department and those people who were against this whole exchange thing anyway, could see this as a spy thing and we always had to have surveys to prove that what Soviets scholars were getting into wasn't damaging to the US I think it was all pretty soft stuff, but nevertheless, it was one of the problems in running the exchanges.

Q: Was there the feeling that you were ending up with thirty-five year old grad students coming from the Soviet Union who were obviously from the KGB?

CORIDEN: That was the feeling on the part of some people. I don't think we were. In many cases Soviet graduates students were older and so they were older when they got here. The Soviets didn't want to send people out in those early years unless they were

solid Soviet citizens, really good people who would not be corrupted and they didn't think twenty-four year old people would be safe. I also think that they sent people so they could be educated in these fields that were important to Soviet society—fields where we were doing very good work. But as many of the US academics pointed out, they could have gotten most of this stuff from our books which they could buy; books that were easily available here or in Western Europe. You couldn't say a scholar couldn't gain something from the experience that you couldn't get from a book, but it wasn't anything that anybody I ever talked to considered to be scientifically significant. One of the other big problems was to get the Soviets to provide living conditions such that our scholars could study effectively in the USSR. There was always the problem of access to the right materials from the library and of general living conditions. I visited some of our students at Moscow State University, who were living in the dorms. I was going into the room of a very nice young couple and there was a guy, a Soviet standing in the hall. There was no light in the hall, and he was standing there reading a newspaper. He couldn't have possibly seen anything that was on that newspaper. He was obviously watching when I went in and perhaps listening in some way. I had an interesting conversation at that time. This young couple, this young American couple—he was a scholar and she was with him—that was another problem—getting the Soviets to accept wives—and we did on a great number of occasions, after acrimonious arguments. They of course didn't send any. That was their argument; we're not sending any, why should you? This couple was telling me of conversations that they had had. They managed to have rapport with some students they had with twenty of them in the room one night. People were asking them what they would do when they went back to the US and one student said he would try to get a fellowship at a university in order to finish up his dissertation and perhaps get an assistant teaching job and if he couldn't do that, he'd probably drive a cab to make money. The Soviets were appalled by all this because they were all at Moscow University and were good students and they knew that had jobs when they graduated. Their big thing was to try and stay in Moscow or go to Leningrad when they graduated. If they couldn't do that they could go to Kiev or someplace else and have a job. There was no doubt about them having a job at

the level they trained for. So they weren't so sure they wanted to buy into our system at that time.

Q: How did we select the students who went?

CORIDEN: There was an organization—an inter-university committee that did select the students. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs had an advisory committee, with policy responsibility, the Board of Foreign Scholarships, which was a board of academics which would do the selection process of students under the CU program for other areas, but for the Soviet Union, they were willing to let the inter-university committee do it. The Committee ran a competition and selected the students who would go. They also placed the Soviet students that came in. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs was turning the programs over to the university people in this country. Within the Bureau, we decided which programs to run, how big they would be and how much financial support CU could provide. We had to negotiate the conditions in the Soviet Union because the Soviets wanted a government to government agreement, not an academic community to academic community agreement. This was difficult for our university people to take, but they found that there was no way around it. We had them as advisors and took their advice on the whole thing and tried to do the best we could with it. It was run in a professional way. In performing arts groups we had an advisory commission in the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs which would advise which groups in a particular field we ought to send over. Then we'd have to get the Soviets to take them.

Q: This was the period of great protests. The Vietnam business was going on and the cultural community in the United States was not on board with our policy.

CORIDEN: The cultural community actually was on board but there were protest groups. The Jewish Defense League, for instance, was always protesting and having demonstrations against Soviet performing arts groups who were coming to this country. That caused problems; we did our best. Saul Hurok and Columbia Artists programed the

Soviet arts groups in this country and it was up to them to provide security for them and they did, for the most part. There were demonstrations and problems. The Soviets, I'm sure, made propaganda out of that back home, but they were still willing to send people here.

Q: What about groups from the United States? I remember an unsponsored group that came to Belgrade. It was called La Mama and today it would be considered mild, but in this period, the four letter words, masturbation portrayed on the stage was really something....

CORIDEN: Theater was one of the most effective performing arts. We had a lot of problems with that, which play to send. The Soviets wouldn't accept a lot of the things we wanted to send them and US domestic groups criticized our choices. I remember we were trying to get jazz groups to the USSR. I had taken a group of Soviets out to the Carter Barron Amphitheater to listen to an organization called the “Nitty Gritty Dirt Band” which was again, according to our advisors, a good group to send to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, we were seated behind a group of people who were smoking pot. The Soviets didn't say anything but they were looking at each and they clearly knew that everyone around them in this outdoor amphitheater was smoking marijuana and there was nothing to be done about it. That made an impression and it took a couple of years for them to accept this group. It wasn't the group's fault, but it tended to have an atmosphere that they didn't care much about.

Q: It was a period when there was tremendous interest by the youth in the Soviet Union with things like jazz, but party hierarchy was pretty conservative.

CORIDEN: That was the problem in trying to get performing groups to the USSR. Some of these Soviets we dealt with wanted to bring in popular US groups. They were impresarios. They knew it would sell well; they knew it would be popular and they knew they would have big houses. They wanted to bring them in but they had to assess their domestic

political reaction. I remember one woman who was in this group, really liked Neil Diamond, from listening to his records. I took them out to a show of Neil Diamond's out at the Capital Center, where hockey is played now. Neil Diamond did a good show, but then he backed out of going after they had accepted him, which was very annoying.

Q: Did you get involved in incidents in which students, exchange people, ending up in the wrong place or getting compromised in the Soviet Union?

CORIDEN: There was only one case and it's still unclear what exactly happened. It was the only one that I'm aware of. I can't say that other people didn't do things they shouldn't have. One guy, as I recall it, was approached by somebody, whether it was a student or an agent to do something. He went for advice to the Embassy and somebody in the Embassy gave him the wrong advice and told him to play along with it. He didn't really know what he was doing and had problems later on as a result of taking the advice. I forget if he was thrown out or what. Again, he tried to do it right and if whoever in the Embassy advised had given him the right advice, I don't know what it would have been —whether he should have gone home because they were trying to get to him or to tell him to tell them to go to “hell” and turn it off, or what, but at any rate, he was given the wrong advice and it didn't work out all that well. It was the only case that I know of where they really had problems. Scholars always had problems trying to travel and getting the research materials they needed. Everything else as far as living arrangements were concerned presented continual problems, but that was the only case I know of where we had anything that might have been arranged by intelligence agents.

Q: Did you have any on the reverse side. Did you have any Soviet exchangees get into any major trouble?

CORIDEN: We had some that were pulled out suddenly, so I assume something was wrong, whether they were going to defect or they had been approached, reported it, and were pulled out—again very few.

I think it was a very successful program. Soviets who had been on the program were turning up in influential places. Not because of the program, they were bright people to begin with and this program hadn't hurt them. They kept rising and they now were familiar with the US and generally favorably disposed. I think it did have an impact. This is true in all the countries where exchanges programs have operated. In those days, it gave a lot of people a leg up. They were dynamic; they were outgoing; they were willing to go abroad for studies or activities of some kind and made an impression when they got back home.

Q: You left the exchange program in 1973?

CORIDEN: I left it because at that time the negotiation on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—the Helsinki Agreement began. I guess I was selected for that because of having more experience than anybody else on negotiating with the Soviet Union on things that were somewhat related to it. It was dealing with living conditions, and, in a way, propaganda, because we were trying to work out magazines and libraries and exchanges in all these information fields. I went with the US delegation to Geneva to negotiate the human rights and free flow of information part of the Helsinki Agreement. None of us really knew what we were getting into at that time. We didn't know how long we'd be at it or anything else. It turned out, we were at it just about two years in Geneva. This was a thirty-five nation conference and agreement of all was required for every decision. At every session almost all the thirty-five were represented. It was an East-West negotiation. Unofficially the Soviets were leading their side and the United States leading our side. It was a really slow, frustrating, tedious negotiation, but we felt it was worthwhile. On many days we had two meetings that found no progress toward agreement and then would adjourn. If we got an agreement on a sentence in a day we thought we were doing well. The Soviets were positioning themselves and we were the “demander” trying to get them to liberalize their system and the treatment of their citizens. Working out positions on the Western side was complicated. NATO was supposed to be the coordination entity. We had NATO meetings almost daily to try and coordinate our positions and our tactics.

But first the European Community which was feeling its way at that time and felt that it had to have its position before they met with NATO. That coordination process on the Western side was very time consuming. It doubled the time we had to spend in meetings. There was also a military aspect of the agreement and we had a great deal of difficulty on the US side in deciding on what positions we would take—with the Pentagon, the State Department, and other elements of that community. They couldn't decide what positions they wanted to bring to NATO. In that aspect of it, which was important to the Soviets—they wanted to make that the central part of CSCE. This was very mild military stuff—confidence building measures. The Soviets wanted something on that end of it and the Pentagon couldn't make up its mind what position it was going to take, so NATO couldn't take a position. That dragged on for a long time.

CSCE was a challenging negotiation and all of us there believed in it but nobody else knew very much about it.

Q: What were you trying to get? What was our objective?

CORIDEN: Our objective was to open up the Soviet Union, to get them to accept reasonable free flow of information; to get them to stop jamming the radios and to accept and exchange publications. In the human rights part of it, we were trying to get them to have the same standards that the West had; giving people the right to leave the country; and giving us a right to travel in their country. All these things that are normal freedoms here. We took it in little phrases, some pretty vague. We felt, at the end, that we had a document which would improve the relationship among the 35. It will have to be admitted that most of what happened to make the CSCE Final Act work was the courage of the Refuseniks and people in the Soviet Union and other countries who took initiative and made it work. If they seized the document and made demands, nothing would have happened. They took this as something their government had signed. It was public; that was part of the agreement. The Final Act, as it turned out, would be publicized and published in all the countries. The Soviets did that—better than we did as a matter of

fact. They published the whole thing in their daily newspaper, verbatim. We couldn't get anybody to publish it here.

Q: Western Europe wanted to open up the Soviet Union, the theory being the more open it is, the less likely were the prospects for hostility.

CORIDEN: That's right. As part of the normalization we were trying to give their citizens an opportunity to travel, to get out. They claimed they all had the right to. I remember having lunch at the end, with the head of the Soviet delegation who had been the guy who was running “Basket Three” which had the human rights, free flow of information, cultural and education. He said, out of the blue, that he knew that we didn't think the Soviets would carry out the agreement, but they would, even if it took ten or fifteen years. This was Dobrynin who eventually became Ambassador here. He was a very able man.

Q: We obviously had a goal which the ruling group in the Soviet Union didn't want. What was in it for them?

CORIDEN: The way CSCE sprang from a Polish or Soviet idea, in about 1954, to have an agreement among all the European countries. It would not include the US and Canada. It was an all European union thing dealing with the principles governing nations. It was a European/UN thing without the infrastructure. The US didn't want it without us being in it. We got the Europeans to say that without the US and Canada, they wouldn't be willing to do it. That stalled the thing for ten or fifteen years with various little initiatives being made. Eventually, the Soviets agreed that the US and Canada could join with the European nations. We still didn't want to do it. Kissinger didn't particularly want this agreement. Then we put in the part of Basket Three, with the human rights and the free flow of information part of it; feeling that that would kill it. The Soviets balanced with the economic part—Basket Two. Once they accepted Basket Three, with human rights and the free flow of information, there wasn't an excuse we could come up with. There was nothing we could do to back out of that. Most European nations now were enthusiastic so we had to

participate. The Soviets wanted a European entity that would give them a leading role in Europe.

Q: One of the ironies, at least the way I see it, was that Kissinger, who was not Secretary of State at that time, but the National Security Advisor and very close to Nixon, was more interested in arms control limitations.

CORIDEN: Yes, he just didn't see any reason to have, and it probably wasn't a good reason, as we saw at the time, to have an organization like this—giving the Soviet Union equal rights. Nobody knew what this would be like. This was anybody's concept. If you could have gotten ten people to sit down and discuss CSCE, all of their concepts would have been different. It was an organization that would make the Soviet Union part of a European group of nations and not only Europe, but eventually Canada and the US. This wasn't something to which Kissinger, apparently, saw any advantage. It was very unlikely that we were going to agree to any substance because the views on most topics were so far apart. That's why it took two years to come out with this. This was with meetings daily, not like the things you see now when they meet for a month, like GATT or these trade talks, and they go home for two months. We were there all the time. We took Christmas vacation and the month of August but we met every day during the rest of the year.

Q: Did you have the feeling that Kissinger was basically undercutting you? Was he a problem to you?

CORIDEN: No. Once CSCE started, the Europeans expressed fear, at the delegation level, that we would come to an agreement with the Soviet Union over any aspects and they would have to accept it. I felt that they didn't have to accept it, but I'm being a little unrealistic because some of the little countries felt that they could be leaned on and made to do it. There could be “condominium” with the Soviets and they would have to accept what we came up with. I had no feeling that Kissinger was even interested enough to

worry about that. On a few little things at the end he did weigh in, but he weighed in on our side in a meeting some place else with Gromyko but we were not always forewarned.

Q: You felt your delegation had support?

CORIDEN: Not really support, because nobody really cared about it. We really felt that we were out there alone. We didn't have much instruction from Washington. We had the desk in EUR which wanted to review everything, but they weren't close enough to understand most nuances. There were critical things we couldn't agree to. There were a lot of stupid things like an exchange of labor unions because Meany wouldn't recognize there were Soviet labor unions as legitimate and the White House wasn't going to take Meany on. We couldn't agree to it even though everybody else wanted it and the contacts would have been a good thing, but he wouldn't recognize that their labor unions were labor unions. They weren't but you would have had contact with them and you might have had an impact on them. You had things like that, but you just went ahead and tried to work things out and eventually got an agreement that the Department and the Soviets could live with.

Q: Actually, the interesting thing is that this agreement that nobody thought much about, had all sorts of spouts that worked.

CORIDEN: Now it's the thing in Europe—they want CSCE to do everything. They have CSCE observers in Belgrade now. It expanded and changed dramatically.

Q: It was the acorn from which a fairly mighty oak grew.

CORIDEN: It was. It was just incredible. Even after it was signed, we were really the only ones who believed in it. Most of the US press reviews were negative or neutral.

Q: What about some of the other delegations on the Western side? The French always seem to be the odd man out on things.

CORIDEN: They do. They always had their own little idea of some kind. Some of their ideas turned to be fairly good ones. Our problems among allies were always with the French and the Irish. The Irish because they couldn't accept NATO positions on these things unless they had gone along with them in the first place in the EC and they wouldn't sit in on NATO meetings because they didn't belong to NATO. We always had that problem. Basically the French were strong and people you could rely on in the human rights and free flow of information things. They would make good statements and had good people.

Q: I would think there could be a problem. There was the Soviet Union and its satellites and then there was the West. I would have thought there was a great opportunity for the Soviets to find the weakness of gaps in the positions between countries and try to drive through and exploit the differences.

CORIDEN: There weren't really many differences among Western countries. We really didn't have that great of a problem. One of the problems was that the US delegation couldn't be as aggressive as we would have liked to be and allies would have liked because our instructions in general terms were to support our allies but not create unnecessary problems with the Soviet Union. These are very vague instructions. I know at least three times the Soviets complained to the head of our delegation about things that I had done and said. I was being a cautious bureaucrat. When I would do these things, I would know that there was something that the Department really couldn't complain about. When the Soviets would attack Voice of America or Radio Free Europe, I could get very nasty, because nobody in the Department is going to send an instruction saying not to defend those organizations again. In being cautious, people were anxious for me to give aggressive speeches because the Soviets were giving them all the time. I had to be very circumspect as to when I could do it. It had to be something I felt the Department couldn't take exception to back home. I was right all the time. No one in the Department ever said I

shouldn't have made any of the aggressive statements. Maybe I should have done it more often!

Q: It's a matter of negotiating style isn't it. In America, the negotiating style is not one of over propagandizing, but rather one of getting on with the business at hand.

CORIDEN: In this session, we talked about the bilaterals, with the Soviets and the tone could fit the political atmosphere. Here you've got the 34 other nations, and if you're not aggressive, the Allies don't think you're on their side and the neutral countries are not sure why you're not aggressive. You have a little more of a public relations problem here than with a bilateral negotiation. I don't think we had any crises because we had endless coordinating meetings and we really got along well with the other delegations. The four neutrals—Sweden, Finland, Austria, and Switzerland—played a key role in coordinating. They were the ones who tried to suggest compromises. We always worried that they would go too far in a proposed compromise statement and the West would have to disown it. The Soviets then could accept it and the impasse would be blamed on the West. You always had to get in that game—keeping them from going too far, but trying to get them to be useful in moving toward a conclusion. Most of the real negotiating was done in informal sessions and small working groups rather than in the formal sessions that met everyday. A large part of the time was spent in trying to get the people who could introduce compromises and get them to formulate in the way in which we wanted. We had a great advantage because all the four neutrals were really on our side. They were neutrals in the sense that they didn't belong to NATO or the Common Market but they were still Western-oriented neutrals. It didn't take a great feat of diplomacy to get them to do it; you just had to get them to do it in a way that wouldn't harm them but would help us.

Q: The treaty was finished in 1975?

CORIDEN: Yes. It was finished in the summer of 1975 and then it was signed in Helsinki.

Q: What did you do after that?

CORIDEN: I came back to CU. That's when I, as part of the Bureau for Education and Cultural Affairs, was assigned to run the cultural exchanges of performing arts groups around the world. I enjoyed that for a period and I enjoyed working with the performing arts and the theater. It is an exciting group of people to work with. Budgets were being cut back and we were able to do less. At that same time, a joint commission in the Congress, a joint Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, was established. Millicent Fenwick, who was a Congresswoman from New Jersey, had the idea,but she didn't have the clout to get it done. Dante Fascell, a Congressman from Florida, got involved. He eventually became Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in the House and was a power in the Committee at time. He eventually organized the Commission. Millicent Fenwick didn't trust Kissinger to push hard enough to take advantage of this agreement which had been negotiated. She wanted the Congress to oversee what was being done and this joint commission was formed. Spencer Oliver, who was a dynamic, young, Democratic politician wanted to be staff director. He didn't know very much about CSCE, but he knew me very well. He'd arranged some of the exchanges of young political leaders that we had in CU. He asked if I would come up and be Deputy on loan to the Commission. I decided that I would be interested. I'd always wanted to work on the Hill and this was a cheap way to do it. There was a big argument in the Department. There was a number of people who didn't want me to go up because I had negotiated the free flow of information and human rights, which was the center of what Congress was interested in.

Q: Was this the Carter period?

CORIDEN: Yes. There were no jobs in the Department dealing with CSCE for me and eventually, Larry Eagleburger decided that I wasn't doing the Department any harm by working on the Hill. He made a decision to let me go. I spent about three years as a Deputy to Spencer Oliver. That was fascinating. In dealing with the Congress, you get an entirely different view of Washington. Traveling with Congressional delegations, doing all

the things as a Hill staffer, and at the same time, trying to stay in the good graces of the Department was complicated. There was a running feud between the Department and the Commission because the Commission was getting into policy things, some of which they shouldn't have been, some of which they should have. They were just trying to find a balance of where they should be. They wanted to be included on delegations. They wanted to be included on NATO consultations. I was the solution many times; they let me go representing the Commission because I was a Department employee. Eventually, they let other Congressional staff people go. It was an uncomfortable period, but I enjoyed doing it.

Q: What was the role of Congress during this period? This went from 1975?

CORIDEN: From 1976-1978. The Commission still operates. Congress wanted to bring great pressure on these governments in Eastern Europe to carry out the agreement. It was Millicent Fenwick's contention that the State Department wouldn't do it. They would talk about it but really wouldn't pressure them. I went on some CODELS to Europe where Congressional members would meet with their counterparts in other countries and try to get them interested in doing the same thing. But as you know, most European parliaments aren't into that sort of thing. Under the parliamentary system they are part of the government; they aren't going to fight the government. The US Commissioners didn't have much luck. They did make statements themselves and they did send delegations to the Eastern European countries. Most of the EE countries wanted to have better relations with the US anyway, particularly trade relations. I can't sort out in my own mind what the Commission accomplished, but it certainly brought pressure on Eastern countries to do something in compliance with the agreement. The dissidents always had an ear in the country and when they would defect, they would have a hearing on the Hill, get publicity and have some impact.

Q: It kept the flame alive.

CORIDEN: Yes. The Commission did do more than the Department would have done because the Department cannot diplomatically run that sort of violent propaganda campaign. Continuing CSCE, there were two review meetings. One was in Belgrade. Justice Goldberg was our Head of Delegation and I went on that group as a member of the Congressional staff. Then there was one in 1980, with Max Kempelman as Head. I was back in the Department then and went as part of the Department.

Q: You finished that when?

CORIDEN: In 1980 and then I went into MMO in the Department. MMO is an important place, but I wasn't a player in the full sense of the word in that I didn't come out of an administrative background, and I had no great desire to go into it. I got less interesting assignments and that's probably why I retired when I did.

Q: You retired when?

CORIDEN: In January, 1984. I was 63. I could have stayed on another year and a half. I remember running into Bob Boudreau and asked him why he retired from a good job. He said that he would wander around the halls and wouldn't know anybody. I felt the same way. I think Larry Eagleburger was the only person I knew in the Department at that time in a respectable position.

Q: Since that time you've done what?

CORIDEN: I've done mediation with Small Claims Court here and with a probation program where there is a mediation aspect. I've done some arbitration with the Better Business Bureau and I've become very active in AARP—the American Association for Retired People. I'm on their national legislative committee and their state legislative committee in DC. I was called back by the Department twice again for CSCE things. There was a Cultural Forum in Budapest in 1985. In most of these other European countries, there are people who have made a very good career out of CSCE. In our country, Jack

Maresca, is the only person who has. It follows that we end up not having many people around who understand CSCE. We had a delegation at the Cultural Forum headed by Walt Stoessel, a very able guy. There are many esoteric rules in CSCE. The Department didn't really have anybody who knew them, so they called me back to serve on that delegation. In 1989, there was the first CSCE meeting in the United States, in New York. This was foreign ministers. We had to supply the secretariat, and again we didn't have many people who knew how it was supposed to run. I went up to New York for a couple of weeks on that along with a couple of other veterans. That's the only thing I've had to do with the Department since.

End of interview